

# MISSOURI REENTRY PROCESS



*Report to the Governor*  
Year End 2006

## **Introduction**

*Almost 97% of the people now in Missouri's prisons will one day be released. Within three years of release, over a quarter of those will go back to prison for a new crime. This rate of recidivism is unacceptably high and expensive. For each new crime, there is a new victim and new costs to Missouri's communities. This trend is in the process of being reversed.*

On September 21, 2005, Governor Matt Blunt signed Executive Order 05-33 which ordered and directed the Missouri Department of Corrections to lead a permanent interagency steering team for the Missouri Reentry Process. The steering team is comprised of the Department of Corrections, the Board of Probation and Parole, Department of Mental Health, Department of Social Services, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Department of Economic Development, Department of Revenue, Department of Health and Senior Services, and the Office of State Court Administrators. In addition, membership also includes community organizations representing crime victims, law enforcement, treatment providers, the faith-based community and any others deemed necessary to accomplish the mission set forth.

The mission of the Missouri Reentry Process Steering Team is to integrate successful offender reentry principles and practices in state agencies and communities resulting in partnerships that enhance offender self-sufficiency, reduce reincarceration, and improve public safety.

## **History**

Missouri was chosen as the first state to implement a model created by the National Institute of Corrections in 2002. This philosophical framework is designed to improve offender transition process during incarceration in an effort to increase public safety, diminish new victimization, make efficient use state and local resources, and to ensure we are preparing offenders to be productive, law-abiding citizens.

Based upon analysis of Missouri's quantitative and qualitative baseline data, the Missouri Reentry Process Steering Team identified factors that are highly correlated with successful transition or recidivism and developed strategies to address these factors. These factors included substance abuse, medical and mental health, transportation, education, employment, housing, family, and information sharing. Thirty-eight strategies were identified by the Missouri Reentry Process Steering Team, focusing around the factors that promote success.

The model indicates the Department of Corrections alone cannot effectively address all issues offenders' face upon release into the community. Therefore, by forming strategic and tactical partnerships that enhance offender self-sufficiency, the mission of the Missouri Reentry Process Steering Team is taking shape.

## **Accomplishments in 2006**

1. **The Missouri Reentry Process Steering Team continues to demonstrate one of the most extraordinary collaborations in state government.** This team was created in 2002 and has continued to meet on a monthly basis over the last four years. As time has advanced, additional agencies were invited to the table including the Department of Revenue. The dedication and loyalty each of the members has displayed have played a large part in the success of the Missouri Reentry Process.

The team continues to recognize that, under most conditions, the majority of ex-offenders will fail at leading law-abiding lives when they return home. This can result in new crimes being committed with a huge cost to taxpayers and their communities. The team continues to concentrate on strategies that need to be identified and implemented to keep offenders from returning to prison.

In an effort to reduce these numbers, various Memorandums of Understanding have been implemented over the course of the year to include the following:

- **Division of Workforce Development:** Establishes how the Department of Corrections will make referrals to the Division of Workforce Development and the services they will provide to offenders. It also outlines how the two departments will coordinate case management, training and ongoing interagency communication.
- **Department of Social Services:** Establishes how the Department of Social Services will educate and provide services to offenders prior to their release from incarceration. This Memorandum of Understanding also allows offenders to apply for Medicaid 90-days prior to their release from incarceration.
- **Department of Revenue:** Outlines the roles and responsibilities of the Department of Corrections and Department of Revenue to provide state identification to offenders prior to their release from incarceration.
- **Department of Health and Senior Services:** Outlines the roles and responsibilities of the Department of Corrections and the Department of Health and Senior Services to allow offenders to apply for their birth certificate.
- **Veterans Commission:** Outlines how the Veterans Commission will provide transitional release services to offenders who are eligible for veteran benefit services.

- **United Migrant Opportunity Service:** Outlines how the United Migrant Opportunity Service/National Farmworker Job Program will provide eligibility determination services, informational sessions and employment and training services, as defined by the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, to eligible offenders residing in a Transitional Housing Unit.
  - **University of Missouri Extension:** Contracted services with the University of Missouri to provide Building Strong Families programming to offenders.
2. **Transitional Housing Units were expanded to six additional institutions totaling eleven institutions with a Transitional Housing Unit.** The following institutions have successfully implemented a Transitional Housing Unit – Alcoa Correctional Center, Boonville Correctional Center, Chillicothe Correctional Center, Cremer Therapeutic Community Center, Farmington Correctional Center, Maryville Treatment Center, Moberly Correctional Center, Missouri Eastern Correctional Center, Western Missouri Correctional Center, Western Reception, Diagnostic and Correctional Center, and Women’s Eastern Reception, Diagnostic and Correctional Center. The focus of business in these units is to ensure offenders are prepared for return to their community. The offender will enter a Transitional Housing Unit approximately six months prior to release and will receive various services including, but not limited to the following: academic and vocational education; obtain identification; cognitive restructuring; mental health, medical and substance abuse treatment with continuity of care into the community; education on faith-based support; employability and life skills; employment services; child support and care; education on strengthening family relationships; pro-social community participation; impact of crime on victims; and other areas identified as critical to the offender’s success.
  3. **The enhanced and automated Transition Accountability Plan for each offender is in the process of implementation.** This will allow staff within the Department of Corrections, as well as partnering state agencies and community organizations, to identify assets and liabilities with the offender, to create realistic goals and build a plan to meet those goals. This planning process begins upon entry into the Department of Corrections and continues with the offender until discharge. This document will prevent duplicative efforts and allow a solid plan of action to be created with the offender to ensure a successful transition into the community. In addition, utilization of the Transition Accountability Plan enhances internal and external communication with partnering and community agencies.
  4. **The Missouri Department of Corrections has been the recipient of several federal grants from the U.S. Department of Justice.** These grants have totaled over \$2.5 million dollars with the expectation to create reentry programs within the state and to ensure community partnerships are developed. In the course of implementation, the Department has formed strong relationships with the faith-

based community, treatment providers, city and county officials, law enforcement, and many others.

5. **The National Institute of Corrections continues to refer many states in the implementation stages of reentry to Missouri for consultation.** The Department of Corrections along with the Missouri Reentry Process Steering Team has provided consultation and best practices for Indiana, New York, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Wisconsin, North Carolina and Kansas during 2006.
6. **Missouri Reentry Process Steering Teams have been created locally across the State of Missouri.** These teams have taken the mission of the state-wide team and are implementing practices and principles at the local level. There are approximately 21 local teams at this time that include partnering state agencies, local governments, law enforcement agencies, ex-offenders and their families, community organizations, service providers and faith-based organizations. These local teams have begun to cultivate relationships with many such partners in local communities to which most offenders return and are addressing the issues offender's face at a local level.

## **CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS**

Although many accomplishments have been noted, the Missouri Reentry Process Steering Team continues to face challenges and barriers in implementing reentry practices and principles on a state-wide level.

1. The most acknowledged barrier is the **inability to share information electronically** with our partnering state agencies. It has been noted that many offenders who are under supervision of the Department of Corrections are also receiving or have received services from our partnering agencies. Unfortunately, duplicative efforts are massive in the assessment and planning stages when agencies cannot effectively share information. Advances in technological resources and incompatibility of computer databases have hindered information sharing between state agencies. The Missouri Reentry Process Steering Team met with the Office of Administration, Information Technology Division, to discuss this issue. We will continue to work cooperatively on possible solutions.
2. One of the major components of successful offender reentry is having the **resources available to provide necessary treatment to offenders while incarcerated and on community supervision.** An offender cannot successfully reenter society without treating the issues that led to the initial criminal behavior. These treatment options include substance abuse services, academic education, vocational education and mental health services. Although adequate funding will always be an issue, the Department has pursued and continues to pursue alternative funding sources such as federal funds and offender generated funds like the Community Intervention Fee to sustain and restore these treatment options.

3. Data reveals **employment** is the leading factor that will promote offender success. In conjunction with the Division of Workforce Development, several strategies have been implemented to enhance the employment rate of the offender population. However, employing ex-offenders has been a challenge due to many jobs in the Missouri economy having been affected by formal restrictions based on criminal records and the employer's concern about liability.

## **OUTCOME MEASURES TO DATE**

An outcome study has been completed by the Department's Research Unit of offenders released through the Missouri Reentry Process. The initial results are encouraging. The study found that offenders released from a Transitional Housing Unit had a recidivism rate after six months that was 6.8% lower than for all offenders who had been released from all institutions during the study period. For offenders who had been released from a Transitional Housing Unit for at least 12 months, the reduction in recidivism was 4.1%. If the reduction in recidivism is maintained as both the number of offenders who go through the reentry process increases and as the time from release increases then the reentry process will significantly reduce the number of offenders being returned to prison. The Department and the Missouri Reentry Process Steering Team plan that the collaborative reentry process will be provided to all released offenders.

The six month recidivism rate for the reentry group is 14.7% compared to 23.4% for offenders released from other institutions, 21.5% from all institutions and to 23.8% for the baseline rate. The twelve month rate is also significantly lower for the reentry group (29.5% compared to 34.2% for other releases, 33.6% for all institutions and to 37.3% for the baseline rate). The recidivism rate for law violations is also lower for the offenders who completed five months or more in a Transitional Housing Unit.

Although the outcome measures are preliminary, they are quite encouraging. The Missouri Reentry Process Steering Team will continue to evaluate this data on a statewide and local level.

**Average Recidivism Rates after 6 and 12 months**

	Releases	Released 6 mths +	Released 12 mths +	First Return		Technical Violations		Law Violations	
				6 mths	12 mths	6 mths	12 mths	6 mths	12 mths
THU 5 mths+	2,347	1,364	268	14.7%	29.5%	12.2%	21.6%	2.6%	7.8%
THU Less 5 mths	1,338	554	-	18.1%	0.0%	15.2%	0.0%	2.9%	0.0%
THU inst. No Rentry	4,421	2,420	331	22.4%	35.7%	18.0%	26.3%	4.4%	9.4%
Other Institutions	9,456	4,840	685	23.4%	34.2%	20.2%	25.7%	3.3%	8.5%
All Institutions	17,562	9,178	1,284	21.5%	33.6%	18.1%	25.0%	3.4%	8.6%
Baseline									
FY05 Releases	16,236	16,236	16,236	23.8%	37.3%	19.5%	28.4%	4.3%	8.9%

## **GOALS FOR 2007**

1. Further identification of barriers to reentry and recommend system, policy and practice reforms to make reentry more successful for individuals coming home from prison.
2. Continued coordination within the Missouri Reentry Process Steering Team to ensure federal, state and local resources are used most efficiently, reduce duplicative efforts and to maximize the effectiveness of our existing resources.
3. Further identification of best practices and promote them at a state and local level.
4. Continued data reviews to ensure the reentry philosophy is having an impact on recidivism.
5. Continued service and technical assistance to other states as they incorporate reentry into their Departments of Correction.

## **IN CLOSING...**

Reentry has been described as one of the most effective and efficient ways of doing business in the Corrections arena. This philosophy prioritized increased public safety by preparing offenders to enter into Missouri communities. With effective and efficient transition practices, the likelihood of reduced recidivism is great. Governor Blunt was the first Governor to sign an Executive Order relating to reentry and has been recognized nationally for this advancement. Shortly following, Florida's Governor Jeb Bush enacted Executive Order 06-89 with many of the same expectations outlined in Governor Blunt's Executive Order. In addition, many projects are underway relative to reentry with the National Governor's Association, the Council of State Governments, the National Institute of Corrections, the Center for Effective Public Policy, and the Department of Justice, all of which the Missouri Reentry Process Steering Team will gain additional knowledge to continue their work.

Former Attorney General John Ashcroft; United States Trade Ambassador (former Congressman R-Ohio) Rob Portman; U.S. Senator Sam Brownback (R-KS); Governor Jeb Bush; United States Supreme Court Justice Anthony M. Kennedy; and President George W. Bush have all taken a public stance on the importance of transitioning offenders back into our communities prepared to be productive, law-abiding citizens. It is with great pride that the Governor of Missouri has taken a stance as well on this issue and continues to support the work of the Missouri Reentry Process Steering Team in enhancing public safety through successful reentry.

The next report on progress of the Missouri Reentry Process will be submitted in January 2008. Should you have any questions, please contact the Director of the Department of Corrections, Larry Crawford at (573) 751-2389.

